

A CENSUS STUDY ON ' MEDIA LITERACY ' AMONGST MEDIA STUDENTS OF BHOPAL

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ABSTRACT

Media Literacy, these two words look like the ordinary word literacy, but it has got inherent and deep meaning as how one can access media, analyse content, being able to evaluate not just the message but should also be able to create media for self-expression and communication. In order to know how media students perceive this term, whether they really understand this term in its real meanings, whether media institutions also help them in understanding this term in a better way and how being media literate will help them in better understanding about the media organisation and their other perspectives. Authors of this research paper tried to analyse various factors and understand their understanding about Media Literacy. For this study we selected Trilanga area of Bhopal and surveyed girls' hostels in the area. After that we adopted lottery system and through chit, girls' hostel of Makhanlal Chaturvedi National University of Journalism and Communication came out. The data was collected with the help of questionnaire from the female hostels of Hostel of MCNUJC consists of 45 female students of media.

Key words: Media Literacy, Media, Content, Literacy, Students

INTRODUCTION

Media Literacy

The word literacy means simply the ability to read and write. And this ability to read and write goes through a certain process. First we start recognising letters; soon, we can identify words and, most importantly, start understanding what those words mean.

After going through this required process, one can become not only a good reader but also a writer. With more experience, readers and writers develop strong literacy skills.

Similarly, Media literacy is the ability to understand the meaning: accessing media, analysing content, being able to evaluate messages, and being able to create media for self-expression and communication. Media literacy is broader term which has deeper meaning and analysis of the work and not just understanding of what represented in the work. Media literacy also enhances our ability to identify any threat to democracy so that people can generate its own opinion which can influence society.

There was no definition of Media literacy available until 1992, when participants at Aspen Media Literacy Leadership Institute defined it as

“Media Literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media in a numerous forms.”

Since then its definition has changed over time and a more concrete definitions needed to include media literacy in the context of its importance for the education of students in a 21st century media culture.

Today Media literacy includes Digital literacy, Information literacy, News literacy, Visual literacy, and Digital citizenship.

Today in the era of information bombardment, kids and youths take in a huge amount of information from a wide array of sources not just from traditional media TV, Radio, newspapers and magazines but also from newer sources like text messages, memes, viral videos, social media, video games, advertising, and more. But all these media has one thing common that someone has created it and it was created for a reason. Understanding that reason is the first step towards learning of media literacy in totality.

In the digital age anyone can create media. We receive numerous messages daily in text and videos forms, but we don't know who actually created it and why they made it and whether it is authentic or not. Here comes the role of media literacy which is an essential skill in this digital age.

Being a media literate, it helps us to think critically, become a smart consumer of products and information, recognise point of views, create media responsibly, identify the role of media in our culture, and understand the author's role.

While we were writing this, news came that Facebook announced the launch of a "Digital Literacy Library" to help young people think critically and build the skills they need to safely enjoy online technology. This is the testament of growing need of imparting media literacy to all rank and files.

HISTORY OF MEDIA LITERACY

Media education can be divided into four historical periods. The first period starts with 1960s, but the

educators of this period didn't realise its potential and importance and ignored the media and its introduction into courses. Even as late as 1960s, no attempts were made towards this. With the rise of TV and other mediums when it became clear that popular mass media would not just wither and disappear, media education entered its second phase-the inoculation phase. Teachers injected mass media into their course but disdain persisted. Teachers were skeptical that current media culture would vitiate students. Courses of Film study of this era was usually consisted of showing clips of Hollywood actors and heartthrobs of millions rebellious Marlon Brando or James Dean with the message that popular media would churn out delinquents only. The term multi-media meant at that time that teacher would accept chart as part of a class written report but not pictures.

The mood was to make fun of the popular media and trying to show its worthlessness.

The third phase tried to use popular media as an enticement to get kids into areas really worthy of study. The fourth phase introduced study of current events in social studies and students were allowed to actually read newspapers with rider- only news, not for the comics or sports or anything entertaining.

All this happened in just 20 years and in many place it is still going on. UK is widely regarded as leader in the development of education for Media Literacy. It is developing in countries like the United States, Australia, South Africa, and Canada. Demand for media education is on rise in countries like Netherlands, Italy, Greece, Austria, Switzerland, India, and Russia among many other nations.

In India too awareness about Media literacy is growing not just at the government level but students too are realizing as how important nowadays to understand this term in its actual meaning due to the exposure of plethora of media.

In recent years more and more media institutions are opening both at public and private levels. But still the term Media Literacy is not construed in its real term in India even by media

students. Hence we conducted our study to know how media students perceive this term and what they think about it.

OBJECTIVES

- ❖ To know whether media students are familiar with the term Media Literacy
- ❖ To know how much they know about Media Literacy
- ❖ To know whether Media Institutions also help them in better understanding about Media literacy.
- ❖ To study how being media literate could help them in understanding of media organisation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

W. James Potter in his book 'Media Literacy' stated that the purpose of Media Literacy is to empower individuals to control media programming. And the term programming doesn't mean television programmes or media coverage. An individual by himself or herself will not have much influence on altering how the mass media craft their messages. An individual will never be able to exercise much control over what gets offered to the public.

However, a person can learn to exert a great deal of the control over the way one's mind gets programmed.

Bill Walsh in his column titled 'A Brief History of Media Education' stated that Media education today is in transition. We are beginning to realize that while "West Side Story" and "Romeo and Juliet" may have similar themes, each deal with the theme in different ways, in different times, with different storytelling techniques.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this study we selected Trilanga area of Bhopal due to time constraint and surveyed girls' hostels in that area. After that we adopted lottery system and through chit, girls' hostel of Makhanlal Chaturvedi National University of Journalism and Communication came out. The data was collected with the help of questionnaire from the female hostelries of Hostel of MCNUJC consists of 45 female students of media.

ANALYSIS

Table-1: Awareness about Media Literacy

| S.N. | Category | N=45 Frequency | Percent |
|------|----------------|-------------------|---------|
| 1. | Strongly agree | 5 | 11.1 |
| 2. | Agree | 21 | 46.7 |
| 3. | Less | 16 | 35.6 |
| 4. | Disagree | 3 | 6.7 |
| | Total | 45 | 100.0 |

When asked how much know they about the term Media Literacy, 46.7 percent said they were aware about it, 35.6 percent were less aware about the

term, 11.1 percent said they were perfectly aware about it while 6.7 were in disagreement.

Table-2: Information regarding media Literacy

| S.N. | Category | Frequency | Percent |
|------|------------------|-----------|---------|
| 1. | Print Media | 5 | 11.1 |
| 2. | Electronic Media | 9 | 20.0 |
| 3. | New Media | 5 | 11.1 |
| 4. | University | 9 | 20.0 |
| 5. | Others | 17 | 37.8 |
| | Total | 45 | 100.0 |

Through this question we wanted to know from where they got to know about Media Literacy, 37.8 percent said they got it from other sources, 20 percent got to know about it from the University and

same 20 percent got is from the Electronic Media.11.1 percent came to know about Media Literacy from Print Media.

Table-3: Media Literate is requirement of understanding of media content

| S.N. | Category | Frequency | Percent |
|------|----------|-----------|---------|
| 1. | Yes | 29 | 64.4 |
| 2. | No | 4 | 8.9 |
| 3. | Neutral | 12 | 26.7 |
| | Total | 45 | 100.0 |

Through this question we asked whether being media literate is prior requirement for understanding media content, 64.4 percent said it is,

26.7 remained neutral on it and 8.9 percent said it's not required.

Table-4: Should students be Media Literate

| S.N. | Category | Frequency | Percent |
|------|----------|-----------|---------|
| 1. | Yes | 36 | 80.0 |
| 2. | Neutral | 9 | 20.0 |

| | | | |
|--|-------|----|-------|
| | Total | 45 | 100.0 |
|--|-------|----|-------|

Through this figure, 80 percent of the students said in yes while none said in no and 20 percent didn't form any opinion.

Table-5: Should Media Literacy be included into Syllabus

| S.N. | Category | Frequency | Percent |
|------|----------|-----------|---------|
| 1. | Yes | 41 | 91.1 |
| 2. | Neutral | 4 | 8.9 |
| | Total | 45 | 100.0 |

Majority of 91.1 percent students said that Media Literacy should be part of the syllabus. 8.9 percent didn't form any opinion. None said against this.

Table -6: Other Students also info about Media Literacy

| S.N. | Category | Frequency | Percent |
|------|----------|-----------|---------|
| 1 | Yes | 39 | 86.7 |
| 2. | No | 1 | 2.2 |
| 3. | Neutral | 5 | 11.1 |
| | Total | 45 | 100.0 |

When asked should other students should also be made Media Literate, 86.7 percent agreed with it,

11.1 percent didn't form any opinion and only 2.2 percent respondents said it's not required.

Table-7: Media Literacy increases better understanding

| S.N. | Category | Frequency | Percent |
|------|----------|-----------|---------|
| 1. | Yes | 39 | 86.7 |
| 2. | No | 1 | 2.2 |
| 3. | Neutral | 5 | 11.1 |
| | Total | 45 | 100.0 |

Through this question, we asked being Media Literate increases better understanding, 86.7 percent agreed with it 11.1 percent chose to remain

neutral and only 2.2 percent said not to this question.

Table-8: Media Literacy helps to understand content

| S.N. | Category | Frequency | Percent |
|------|----------|-----------|---------|
| 1. | Yes | 40 | 88.9 |
| 2. | No | 2 | 4.4 |
| 3. | Neutral | 3 | 6.7 |
| | Total | 45 | 100.0 |

Through this question we asked Media Literacy helps in understanding content, 88.9 percent said it does

while 4.4 percent said no and 6.7 percent remained neutral .

Table-9: New Media increased Media Literacy

| S.N. | Category | Frequency | Percent |
|------|-------------------|-----------|---------|
| 1. | Strongly Agree | 6 | 13.3 |
| 2. | Agree | 27 | 60.0 |
| 3. | Neutral | 11 | 24.4 |
| 4. | Strongly Disagree | 1 | 2.2 |
| | Total | 45 | 100.0 |

When asked whether recent revolution in New Media has increased understanding about media Literacy, 60 percent of the respondents agreed with

it, 24.4 percent chose to remain neutral while 13.3 percent strongly agreed with it. Only a minuscule 2.2 percent strongly disagreed.

Table-10: Media organisation bound to change their content due to increased Media Literacy

| S.N. | Category | Frequency | Percent |
|------|----------|-----------|---------|
| 1. | Yes | 20 | 44.4 |
| 2. | No | 3 | 6.7 |
| 3. | Neutral | 22 | 48.9 |
| | Total | 45 | 100.0 |

When asked increased Media Literacy will force them to change their content, 48.9 percent didn't form any opinion on it, while 44.4 percent believed it

will and 6.7 percent of the respondents said they didn't think so.

Table-11 Reduces misconceptions in society about Media Literacy

| S.N. | Category | Frequency | Percent |
|------|----------|-----------|---------|
| 1. | Yes | 36 | 80.0 |
| 2. | Neutral | 9 | 20.0 |
| | Total | 45 | 100.0 |

When asked being media literate can reduce misconceptions in society, 80 percent agreed with it while 20 percent remained neutral.

Table-12 Knowing Media Literacy has changed your perception

| S.N. | Category | Frequency | Percent |
|------|-------------------|-----------|---------|
| 1. | Strongly Agree | 7 | 15.6 |
| 2. | Agree | 28 | 62.2 |
| 3. | Neutral | 4 | 8.9 |
| 4. | Disagree | 2 | 4.4 |
| 5. | Strongly Disagree | 4 | 8.9 |
| | Total | 45 | 100.0 |

Through this question we asked them whether knowing Media literacy in its meaning changed your perception and to what extent, 62.2 percent said they agree with it, 15.6 percent said they strongly

agree with it, 8.9 percent remained neutral, 4.4 percent of them disagreed with it and 8.9 percent strongly disagreed.

Table-13 Government should take initiative in increasing Media Literacy

| S.N. | Category | Frequency | Percent |
|------|----------|-----------|---------|
| 1. | Yes | 38 | 84.4 |
| 2. | No | 4 | 8.9 |
| 3. | Neutral | 3 | 6.7 |
| | Total | 45 | 100.0 |

When asked should government take initiative to increase awareness about Media Literacy, 84.4 percent agreed with this while 8.9 percent said no and 6.7 percent chose to remain neutral.

Table-14: Do you cross check content before forwarding

| S.N. | Category | Frequency | Percent |
|------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| 1. | Yes | 11 | 24.4 |
| 2. | Sometimes | 27 | 60.0 |
| 3. | Never | 7 | 15.6 |
| | Total | 45 | 100.0 |

Through this question we asked whether they cross check any content they receive before forwarding, a majority 60 percent said they do it sometimes, and

24.4 percent said they really do it while 15.6 percent of them never cross check.

Table-15: Feedback on Media Content

| S.N. | Category | Frequency | Percent |
|------|----------|-----------|---------|
| 1. | Yes | 32 | 71.1 |
| 2. | No | 3 | 6.7 |
| 3. | Neutral | 10 | 22.2 |
| | Total | 45 | 100.0 |

When asked whether they give feedback on content being provided by the media, 71.1 percent of them said that they give feedback. 6.7 percent said no and 22.2 percent remained neutral on this question.

FINDINGS

We found through this study that the term media Literacy is known to the respondents (46.7) percent were aware about it, (35.6) percent of them were less aware about it and only (11.1) said that they were fully aware about it. The source of information about Media Literacy for (37.8) percent were other sources, (20) percent got to know about it from Electronic Media while the same 20 percent respondents got from the University where they studies. (64.4) percent respondents believed that being media literate is pre-requirement to understand media in better way. (80) percent of the respondents believed that they should be media literate. A majority (91.1) percent of the respondents believed that Media Literacy as a subject should be

included into the syllabus. (86.7) percent respondents also believed that not only media students rather students from other streams should also be made media literate. (86.7) percent respondents believed that being media literate helped them in better understanding of the media content. (60) percent of the respondents believed that their awareness about this term was greatly by New Media. Interestingly (44.4) percent believed that increased Media Literacy will force media organisation to change the way they deliver content, while (48.9) percent chose to remain neutral. (80) percent of them said that Media literacy helped them in mitigating misconceptions about the society. (62.2) percent believed that Media Literacy has helped them in changing their perceptions. (84.4) percent respondents believed that the government should take initiative in increasing awareness about the Media Literacy. When it comes to forwarding any messages, 60 percent said they did it sometimes, (24.4) percent said they always did that while (15.6) percent never did that. (71.) Percent said that they gave feedback to the media.

CONCLUSIONS

Through this study we found that respondents were aware about media Literacy but the awareness about it in its real sense was missing in majority of them. A majority believed that they should be media literate because being media literate help them in better understanding of the media and also it reduces their misconceptions and change their perceptions. They also said the increased media literacy will force the media organisation to change the they way they are delivering content now.

Respondents also said that the government should take initiative in increasing the awareness about this.

SUGGESTIONS

Keeping the findings of this study we humbly suggest to the Central as well as State Governments that since Mass Communications & Journalism in India is in evolving stage in India and even students of this field are not fully aware about this term in its real meanings, hence the governments should introduce Media Literacy (which is used synonymously as Media Education in the Western countries as an expanded conceptualisation of literacy) in schools, colleges and Universities for developing people's critical and creative abilities when it comes to mass media, popular culture and digital media. When people start understanding media and technology, they would be in better position to access, analyse, evaluate, and create message in a wide variety of media genres and forms.

Today when media is expanding mode and accessible in all forms- print, electronic and digital to the people to remain in reckoning, it's high time that

governments should also make efforts to make people's understanding of this term in its real sense. Through Media Education, people will have opportunities to broaden their experience of media through critical analysis that includes identifying makers of the content, their purposes and point of view. How media constructs messages and representation patterns of the same and identifying propaganda, censorship, and bias in news and public affairs programming. Media literacy education will also help understanding of media ownership, cross ownership of media and its funding model and how these play a major role in their presentation of information.

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